

November 11, 2021

Karen Gwozdowski-Gauvin, Chair
Board of Health
Town of Grafton
Grafton Memorial Municipal Center
30 Providence Road
Grafton, MA 01519

Ms. Gwozdowski-Gauvin:

The mission statement of the Grafton Board of Health is to protect the health, safety and well-being of the town of Grafton residents.

As abutters and concerned citizens of Grafton, we are writing to you today to express our concern regarding the large-scale warehouse or life sciences manufacturing facility being proposed at 244 Worcester Street which will have a significant negative impact on the health, safety, and well-being of all Grafton residents.

The community started learning about this project in late September, with the multiple public hearings run by the Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals. Even former Chair McCusker of the Zoning Board of Appeals has questioned whether or not this project meets the definition of being in the "public good." As the community learns more about the project, the concerns grow. Grafton is not located in an urban setting. It is our right as residents to have the benefit of use and enjoyment of our properties.

Health Concerns

The current plans call for an approximately 300,000+ square foot warehouse or life science manufacturing facility with 75 truck bays in the rear-side of the building. This is considered a large-scale warehouse operation. Normal warehouses house between 35-45 truck bays. We do not know who the end-user will be, but with 75 truck bays, a considerable amount of truck traffic throughout town will become a reality.

Truck Emissions:

"Trucks are the largest source of air pollution from vehicles responsible for 70% of the smog-causing pollution and 80% of the carcinogenic diesel soot..." "Its composition often includes hundreds of chemical elements, including sulfates, ammonium, nitrates, elemental carbon, condensed organic compounds, and even carcinogenic compounds and heavy metals such as arsenic, selenium, cadmium and zinc." It is widely known that these emissions can "cause respiratory and cardiovascular issues leading to premature death." "Diesel emissions are now the primary source of air pollution in the Northeast, leading to a higher-than-average asthma rate, including a child asthma rate that is 10% higher than the national average."

In typical warehouse operations, there are normally 4-8 truck deliveries per truck bay per day. Multiplying by 75 bays and trips to and from the Mass Pike, this equates to 600-1200 trips per day by two densely packed neighborhoods of Grafton and the adjacent neighborhoods of West Millbury. During the 6 months of winter, once the trucks arrive, it is common practice to keep their engines idling to prevent freezing of the fuel. With a 7/24 operation, the neighborhoods will be subject to 24 hours of truck emissions, contributing to unhealthy air outdoors and indoors through fresh air intakes. Fumes can carry up to 2-3 football field lengths which will certainly affect the two adjacent neighborhoods, all of Grafton, West Millbury, and South Shrewsbury. This equates to over 14,268

pounds of CO2 emissions from one truck to and from the Mass Pike. Multiplied by 600 trips is 8.56 million pounds. Multiplied by 1200 trips is 17.12 million pounds.

Safety

With 600-1200 daily trips to the warehouse, the increased truck traffic will pose a hazard to our neighborhood streets and clog our main access roads, not to mention bus routes for the schoolchildren. Peaceful walks and schoolchildren bike-riding after school and on vacations will be distant memories. On Worcester Street, there are sections that do not have sidewalks or crosswalks.

As many neighborhoods across the country have been experiencing detrimental impacts from warehouses being quickly constructed without awareness of health and safety concerns – we have the opportunity to not blindly follow along, but to carefully consider whether this is what we want for our Town's quality of life in what has been a desirable mix of residential and commercial properties. The approximate distance of this proposed distribution center/warehouse from the main road is 50 feet; this is less distance than running from home plate to first base – on a little league field. In addition, this proposed facility will be **less than 300 feet** from the nearest residential neighbor directly across the street.

For example, after Northborough installed a large-scale warehouse, school track teams can no longer run on the streets due to safety hazards of the trucks going to and from the warehouse. Residents are frustrated with the traffic, truck drivers are diverting into neighboring streets, jackknifing and blocking roads, driving onto lawns, taking to neighborhoods-streets to sleep.

The town of Milford also accepted an Amazon Warehouse/distribution center in their town. Even with all the industry they already had, Amazon traffic has proven to be a nightmare. Since the warehouse contracts out many of their drivers, the town is left with little or no recourse when problems arise. *Bill Buckley, the chairman of the Milford Board of Selectmen, is also frustrated about how Amazon's employees drive.* "Typically, what they'll say is, 'Go talk with our contractors. Cite them if they're not driving properly, "It's just consistent, backed up traffic. If we knew it was going to be like this, I don't think we would've allowed it in the town," said resident Michael Rooney. *Town officials also believe the volume of delivery vehicles traveling to and from the distribution and transportation centers in Milford is overwhelming.* "The benefit to taxes and revenue is far less than the (negative) impact that they're having on our community and quality of life."

In California, where large warehouses have been constructed for Amazon, residents regularly get notices of poor air quality in large part due to emissions from truck traffic. The research compiled by the People's Collective for Environmental Justice (PCEJ).... shows how warehouses have proliferated in the Inland Empire, an industrial region 60 miles east of Los Angeles. The warehouses, which bring severe truck pollution to neighborhoods, are correlated with bad air quality and related health problems. "And all that traffic has correlated with a rise in dangerous air quality and subsequent respiratory health problems that hit communities of color the hardest, including asthma, bronchitis and cancer, according to a report this month by the People's Collective for Environmental Justice, researchers at the University of Redlands and other local groups."

The Economic Roundtable authors also documented the environmental cost to communities hosting Amazon fulfillment centers:

“Every day, ships, trucks, trains and airplanes bring an estimated 21,500 diesel truckloads of merchandise to 21 Amazon warehouses in the four-county region,” they wrote. Amazon trucks last year created \$642 million in “uncompensated public costs” for noise, road wear, accidents and harmful emissions, the report said.

Our concerns as neighbors of a large proposed warehouse are mirrored in efforts across the country to confine the warehouses to non-residential areas: <https://sites.google.com/view/distributioncenters/home>

Wellbeing

- Noise: with a 7/24 facility, noise will be a constant – the increased truck traffic and including the reversing of the truck to get into the loading docks: “The Information's report highlights that the trucks cause a significant disturbance in the previously quiet New England town. The publication observed 52 tractor-trailers at the Amazon facility between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m., and measured sounds from the trucks above 85 decibels — similar to a lawn mower.”
- Odors: 7/24 diesel fumes
- Light pollution: with a 7/24 operation, lights will be on 16 hours per day (winter) and 12 hours per day for the rest of the year
- Loss of value to our properties
- Who will be the end user?

Environmental Concerns:

It is our right as taxpayers, to ask and expect answers to these questions during the public hearing process:

- Has Wyman Gordon cleaned the land prior to selling the parcel?
- Will all the vegetation be removed from 244 Worcester Street?
- Will development restrict the flow of wildlife?
- Will the toxic emissions travel to Flint, Hovey Ponds into our drinking water wells?
- How will the large parking lots be treated during the winter?
- What is the groundwater mitigation plan?
- What is the environmental mitigation plan?
- Will there be a noise mitigation plan?
- Is earthwork involved in the project?
- Where in the project is the buffer that will be enjoyed as open space?
- What will be stored in the warehouse?
- If life science manufacturing facility, what will be housed in the facility and what will be emitted?

Thank you for listening to our concerns.

Respectfully,

Rosemarie Boulanger, 10 Fairlawn Street
Chris & Amy Thornton, 15 Maplewood Drive
Lindsey Holdsworth, 9 Fairlawn Street
James Shannon, 237 Brigham Hill Road

On Behalf of Abutters to 244 Worcester St., Concerned Citizens of Grafton

Cc:
Grafton Conservation Commission
Grafton Planning Board
Grafton Zoning Board of Appeals
Millbury Board of Health
Shrewsbury Board of Health

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